

OBSERVATIONS ON THE LEPIDOPTERA
OF ONE SITE NEAR CAHORS, FRANCE,
FROM 23RD TO 30TH JUNE, 1984

By A. SPALDING*

On a visit to France for the last week of June, 1984, I ran an m.v. light for a few nights at our rented cottage, near Le Boulve, a tiny village about 20 Km. west of Cahors. The season was late, the weather changeable, with some rain, lots of cloud, and one very spectacular 24 hour thunderstorm. The French customs had been very suspicious about my Robinson trap, but when I agreed to take it back to England with me, they let me through. During the week I identified 99 species (excluding "micros" except the Pyralidae). All were released the night after capture.

It was marvellous to see those moths that are so uncommon in England, although there was more excitement seeing one *Mythimna albipuncta* D. & S. in Cornwall than many in France, and what a pity that the *Dysgonia algira* Linn. I saw was not the 4th record for England! It was good to see those moths that we don't get in Cornwall, e.g. *Lygephila pastinum* Treit, *Apoda limacodes* Hufn, *Dypterygia scabriuscula* Linn, *Meganola albula* D. & S., *Tyta luctuosa* D. & S., *Apamea sublustris* Esp., *Boarmia roboraria* D. & S. *Oncocera semrubella* Scop, and the less common *Aspitates gilvaria* D. & S. and *Sabra harpagula* Esp. Of course, many of these moths are to be found only in chalk and limestone districts, such as surrounded our cottage, whereas Cornwall has only one tiny outcrop of limestone, and so none of these moths occur.

Out of 99 species, 9 occur here regularly or occasionally as migrants: *Harpia milhauseri* Fabr (found once in Britain), *Dysgonia algira* Linn (found 3 times), *Catephia alchymista* D. & S. (found 15 times), *Arctornis 1-nigrum* Mull (over 100 times), *Mythimna albipuncta* D. & S., *Mythimna vitellina* Hb., *Hyles euphorbiae* Linn., *Conistra erythrocephala* D. & S. (once resident in S. E. England) and *Mythimna 1-album* Linn (probably temporarily resident in Cornwall). I should include *Emmelia trabealis* Scop, as I believe this is extinct in England. The three *Mythimna* species have been seen by me in Cornwall.

I also found 10 species that have not occurred in Britain to my knowledge. One specimen of *Gastropacha populifolia* W.V. turned up, more richly coloured than its near relation in Britain, *Gastropacha quercifolia* Linn. Although west of Cahors the climate is not noticeably continental, the warmth loving *Marumba quercus* Schiff was common and *Spatalia argentina* D. & S., another thermo-

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philic species, was also trapped. The Arctiidae were represented by *Diacrisia pupurata* Linn and the very common *Eucharia casta* Esp, which apparently was flying a month later than usual. The Zygaenidae were represented by *Zygaena fausta* Linn, a day-flying moth with black wings covered by orange spots, common on the limestone hills of southern Europe. One specimen of *Catocala conversa* Esp appeared, distinguished from *Catocala nupta* Linn by the unbroken black border round its dull yellow hindwings. Another of the Noctuidae was *Anthophila purpurina* W. V., which has small red and yellow wings. Two of the Geometridae appeared, most commonly *Rhodostrophia calabra* Pet plus a single specimen of *Lomographia cararia* Hubn.

Idaea humiliata Hufn was also present, one *Cucullia* species that I was not able to identify, plus a possible *Acrionicta tridens* D. & S. that, luckily for it, escaped before I could check its genitalia. Out of 99 species, only 29 were unfamiliar to me from Cornwall. I had not expected such a high degree of similarity, as Cahors is over 400 miles south of Cornwall, 100 miles from both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and surrounded by limestone hills rather than the slates and granites of Cornwall.

References

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LYGEPHILA CRACCAE FAB. (SCARCE BLACKNECK) IN S. W. CORNWALL. — The capture of a very worn specimen of this local moth at the Lizard on October 15th, 1985, perhaps deserves comment. (*Ent. Rec.* 98:120). If the larva is indeed restricted in Britain to *Vicia sylvatica* (wood vetch) it would appear that the moth was a wanderer from the coast of N.E. Cornwall or Devon some eighty miles away, for according to *The Atlas of British Flora* (Perring and Walters, 1962), wood vetch is not found near the Lizard, or from the Continent where in France the insect is widespread and has been noted on a variety of plants. The date of capture coincided with a considerable invasion of *Plusia gamma* L., *Phlogophora meticulosa* and *Mythimna loreyi* Dup. I can find no previous reference of this species being found in this area. B. K. WEST, 36 Briar Road, Bexley, Kent.